

**Statement by the Republic of Moldova
156th Session of the WHO Executive Board
Agenda Item 8: Mental Health and Social Connection**

Honourable Chair, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

The Republic of Moldova welcomes the report by the Director-General on mental health and social connection and appreciates the WHO's commitment to addressing social isolation and loneliness as key public health challenges.

Moldova aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Pandemics, wars, the massive use of information technologies, drug and alcohol consumption, different addictions, propaganda, violence, aggressiveness of information, loss of jobs, migration leave their mark on mental health, especially in the case of the most vulnerable categories - the children, women and elderly.

All these challenges facing the present century make mental health services the most sought after in the coming years.

In this context we acknowledge that social connection is a fundamental determinant of mental and physical health, and we support the inclusion of this topic in WHO's comprehensive public health agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated social disconnection worldwide, impacting vulnerable populations. In Moldova, we have observed firsthand the effects of social isolation on mental well-being, educational attainment, and workforce productivity.

Immediately after the pandemic, an unjust war started 30 km from Chisinau, in the neighbouring country, Ukraine, which forced people to take the path of wandering. Moldova, with a population of 2.4 million, received over 1 million Ukrainian refugees since then.

Services that the refugees - women, children and the elderly, needed the most was psychological support. That made us create intervention teams and call for international help in this regard.

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated and multisectoral response.

So, Moldova aligns with the proposed areas of action outlined in the report, particularly the need for:

- **Strengthening policy integration:** We advocate for social connection to be incorporated into national health strategies, ensuring that mental health interventions include measures to foster meaningful human relationships.
- **Multisectoral collaboration:** Addressing social disconnection requires cross-sector efforts, engaging health, education, labour, and social protection sectors.
- **Evidence-based interventions:** We emphasize the importance of scaling up research and data collection to better understand the impact and identify effective interventions, particularly for marginalized populations.

We urge WHO to provide clear technical guidance to Member States on integrating social connection into public health policies, mobilizing resources to support implementation, and fostering strong regional and global collaborations.

We also encourage WHO to engage with the broader UN system to ensure that social connection is recognized as a critical factor in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for your attention.